DECISION NOTICE

Two Eagle Vegetation Management Project
U.S. Forest Service
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
La Grande Ranger District
Baker County, Oregon

The Two Eagle Vegetation Management project Environmental Assessment (EA) compares a range of alternatives derived from key issues across the 7,206 acre planning area. The EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are incorporated by reference and available at https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49749.

DECISION

This Decision Notice (DN) is based on my review of the Two Eagle EA, specialist reports, associated scientific literature, response to public input during both the scoping and preliminary EA comment periods, and objection period.

Based on analysis described in the EA and project record, I have decided to implement Alternative 2 Modified (2M). This alternative was designed to address the purpose and need and key issues identified during scoping with a focus on restoring forest vegetation components to their historic range, improving landscape resiliency to disturbances, preparing Wildland Urban Interface Zones (WUI) for wildfire, providing forest products to the local economy, and enhancing critical habitat components for wildlife.

ALTERNATIVE 2M DESIGN

Priority treatment areas

Each treatment unit (commercial, noncommercial and prescribed burning) has been prioritized in the following ways:

Priority One - Eagle Creek/Tamarack WUI and project areas within 1 mile of private land

- Eagle Creek/ Tamarack Springs WUI – treatments would provide defensible space for firefighting resources adjacent to the physical improvements within the WUI.
- Forest Service roads 6700, 7700 and 7755 are the primary access/egress routes for this WUI and associated residences and recreational facilities. Fuels treatments along those road systems would be designed to increase public and firefighter safety and provide greater options for future wildfire or prescribed fire management.

Priority Two - Strategic fuels breaks along road systems and ridges to Create Defensible Fuels Profile Zones (DFPZs)

- Treatments would be focused on stands adjacent to forest service roads 7700-550, 7700-470, 7700-480, 7700-450, 7700-457 and 6700-830.

Commercial Vegetation Management and Fuels Reduction Treatments

Improvement Harvest (HIM) - Activities in this prescription include thinning and removing trees characterized by poor form, damaged condition, or ecologically inappropriate species within a stand for the purpose of improving growth, composition and quality of the remaining stand. Treatment includes restoring stands to old forest single story (OFSS) structure where appropriate based on site conditions, aiding in the restoration of deficient OFSS conditions across the project area. This prescription promotes restoring historic densities and encourages a shift in species composition toward the historical range.

Commercial Thinning Harvest (HTH) –Thinning from below improves growing conditions, tree quality and future economic value of the stand. Treatment is accomplished by removing smaller over-topped trees, poorly crowned intermediates and co-dominants which compete for resources and create ladder fuels into the canopies of mature trees. Thinning treatments will focus on restoring appropriate species compositions and promoting development of large tree structural conditions.

Patch Openings (HPO) – Patch openings are designed to reduce crown fuels by increasing the presence of western larch, whitebark pine and cottonwood. Approximately 10% of these units would create small canopy openings, varying in size from 4 to 6 acres, to improve the stand's resilience to wildfire, insect and disease outbreaks. The remaining 90% of treatment within these units would be a matrix of thinned and untreated areas. This treatment replicates natural disturbance patterns and helps enhance visual and structural diversity in currently dense, homogenous stand conditions.

Biomass Removal (WFM) - Similar to precommercial thinning (PCT) and fuels reduction (RWF) prescriptions, this treatment would cut small diameter trees (less than 9 inches DBH) to reduce ladder fuels and manage understory densities. The cut materials would then be removed from the site for use as biomass.

Post-harvest follow up: Units would be monitored following harvest activity for site preparation, regeneration, or stand improvement needs. Other post-harvest treatments may include precommercial thinning, site preparation and/or fuels reduction with fire, grapple/slashbuster manipulation of slash, and whip felling (cutting of small diameter suppressed and damaged understory).

Table 1. Alt 2M Commercial Treatment Acre Totals by Silvicultural Prescription

Prescription	Acres	Units
Commercial thinning – HTH	348	21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 40, 41, 45, 48, 54, 86, 96
Improvement harvest – HIM	1,116	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 30, 31, 34, 36, 38, 42, 43, 49, 50, 51, 52, 55, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 71, 74, 75, 80, 85, 88, 89, 97, 98, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120
Patch Openings – HPO	35	78, 79
Riparian HPO – RHC HPO	7	95, 112, 113
Biomass Removal – WFM	362	53, 69, 127, 128, 129, 133, 135, 138, 145, 147, 149, 152, 157, 160, 161
Seed Tree Removal – HCR	1	84
Total Commercial Treatment	1,869	

Non-Commercial Fuels Reduction Treatments

Fuels Reduction (RWF) - The areas proposed for this type of treatment are generally located adjacent to private inholdings, WUI areas, and along key strategic road and ridge systems within the project area. This prescription is designed to remove ladder fuels and manage understory tree density at appropriate

levels using hand treatments. Ladder fuels are defined as trees less than 9 inches DBH growing under the drip line (radius of the canopy) of the dominant and co-dominant trees within the unit. Left untreated these trees provide a ladder for flames to reach into the crowns of larger trees, ultimately increasing the probability of a stand replacing crown fire and loss of large trees. Excess dead and down fuels would also be also be piled and burned.

Pre-commercial Thinning (PCT) - Manual or mechanical pre-commercial thinning of selected trees in young stands with an emphasis on variable spacing (14-20 feet between trees) retaining dominant, healthy trees of desired species. Approximately 10% within each unit would be left untreated to provide for wildlife habitat and structural diversity. Preferred species to leave on site include western larch, ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. Slash would be treated through slash busting, piling and/or burning, or would be lopped and scattered and remain on site to promote nutrient cycling of the residual fuels. The resulting treatment would reduce the wildfire risk, increase growth potential, and decrease the risk for insect and disease transmission.

Table 2. Alt 2M Noncommercial Treatment Acre Totals by Silvicultural Prescription

Prescription	Acres	Units
Whip Felling - RWF	390	3, 12, 35, 37, 57, 59, 90, 121, 123, 124, 126, 130, 131, 148, 156, 157, 158, 159
Pre-commercial Thinning - PCT	290	63, 92, 93, 94, 102, 115, 139, 140, 150, 151, 153, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166
Mule Deer Habitat - Meadow Restoration	27	M1, M2, M3
Total Noncommercial Treatment	707	

Fuels Blocks

Prescribed understory burning is planned primarily on south-facing slopes and will occur over the next 10 years following completion of harvest activities. Burning blocks range in size from approximately 100-1,400 acres and are located based on their ability to restore the historic fire regime, potential to promote forest resiliency, and ability to support DFPZs. Fuels blocks would enhance the utility of both planned and unplanned fire by promoting conditions for low to moderate intensity burning that reduces litter, duff, and 0-3 inch surface fuels. Burning would raise canopy base heights and reduce understory stocking levels increasing resilience of residual trees and promote the development of seral species while enhancing forage and browse for domestic and wildlife species.

Approximately 6,369 acres of prescribed burning is proposed within the area implemented over the next 10 years including 928 acres of jackpot burning, 1,569 acres of pile burning, and 3,872 acres of natural fuels burn blocks in the following affected units:

Table 3. Alt 2M Prescribed burning

Prescribed Burning	
Treatment Type	**Total Acres**
Burn Block 601	105
Burn Block 602	639
Burn Block 603	1,436
Burn Block 604	435
Burn Block 605	850
Burn Block 606	411
Jackpot Burning	985
Pile Burning	1,569

Total	**6,369**

Post-Sale Road Management Plan (refer to Appendix F for detailed map)

A road management plan has been developed for the Two Eagle project area. Motorized access on existing closed roads needed for layout, contractors, and sale/contract administrators would be managed by road use permits issued by the La Grande Ranger District.

Changes to the open road system as a result of this project are as follows:

- Road 7700-460 is an important access road within WUI areas and is currently closed with an earthen berm. This berm would be replaced with a gate following project activities to maintain general closure while providing administrative access for future management purposes or wildfire suppression.
- A 0.1 mile user built section of the 6700-830, which travels up a steep slope to connect switchbacks on the main road, creates soil erosion and compaction issues. This 0.1 mile section is proposed for rehabilitation.
- The 6700-064 and 7700-533 roads are currently open to the public and provide ditch service access. The 6700-064 travels through important wildlife source habitat and a designated old growth area. The 7700-533 fords West Eagle Creek impairing water quality and fish habitat. These roads would be closed and managed with gates to allow access for ditch maintenance and fire suppression while reducing impacts to important wildlife and aquatic species and their habitat.
- With the exception of the roads described above, any road currently closed by gate or barricade used to facilitate harvest/fuel reduction activities would remain open for up to 5 years to provide public access and facilitate completion of harvest, post-sale thinning and/or burning activities. Upon completion of final treatments, roads would return to a stored/closed condition.
- Roads totaling approximately 8.1 miles would be decommissioned and removed from the transportation system. These roads have been identified as either duplicate access or no longer needed on the landscape for resource management and recreation access, and in most circumstances are located in draw bottoms or in close proximity to stream channels. These roads would be returned to resource production and removed from the road system. Approximately 4.85 miles of these roads are currently grown in and have not received any use in the last 20+ years. These grown in/naturally reclaimed roads would not be disturbed, but would have signs removed and roads removed from forest maps. The remaining 3.25 miles of road would require physical barriers to decommission.

Several sites have been identified with user-built roads and unauthorized use on closed roads that are causing resource damage. Addressing the access points and allowing areas to recover would have benefits to fish, streams, wildlife, vegetation, scenic integrity, and overall recreational experience. Plans to correct the issues include:

- 7700-539 road. This road is currently closed and portion of the road up to the existing stream ford would be decommissioned to protect fish habitat and water quality.
- 7755-075 road – first 200 feet of this road would be kept for access to a dispersed campsite, while the remainder of the road would be decommissioned to protect the wet meadow this road travels through.
- Close access to three user-built (non-system) roads off the 7755 road that lead into the Boulder Park Roadless Area and adjacent wilderness.

Removal Systems Summary

Proposed harvest treatments are estimated to result in the removal of approximately 7 million board feet of saw and non-saw material using the following yarding systems.

- Skyline based yarding systems - 291 acres
- Ground based yarding systems - 1,209 acres

No new permanent road construction is proposed with this project. In addition to regular road maintenance activities on roads used to facilitate harvest activities, approximately 17.03 miles of reconstruction/maintenance would be proposed in the following categories:

- 15.33 miles - Specified road maintenance to re-open roads which have grown closed.
- 1.7 miles – Resource Protection Reconstruction to fix/prevent sediment issues and facilitate timber haul.
- Place approximately 4 temporary culverts
- Replace approximately 3 culverts

Approximately 5.25 miles of temporary road construction are proposed to facilitate harvest systems. Of those, approximately 1.75 miles are on existing wheel tracks (non-system roads) and would require minimal ground disturbance to be used for harvest activities. Temp road 24 (T-24) provides access to dispersed camping within the WSR corridor and would remain open after harvest activities. The user-built section at the end of T-24, behind the primary dispersed campsite, would be reclaimed and fenced off to prevent further resource damage from ATV travel. All other temporary roads would be decommissioned after use by implementing some or all the following activities: installation of erosion control devices, ripping to reduce soil compaction, seeding with native species, and camouflaging roads to discourage further use.

An estimated 15.33 miles of currently closed roads would be re-opened to facilitate harvest and fuel reduction activities. In general, currently closed roads opened to facilitate project activities would remain open up to 5 years to provide public access and facilitate completion of post-harvest work. Upon completion of final treatments, roads would be returned to a closed/stored condition (refer to the post sale road management plan section below and attached map). If winter logging is done using the 6700, 7700, and 7755 roads, use would be coordinated with the District Recreation Manager to designate an alternative snowmobile route while log haul is occurring.

The perched culvert on NFS road 7700-450 has been identified as a fish passage barrier. This culvert would either be reset or an approach to the perch created to allow for fish passage to high quality habitat above the culvert.

Enhancement Work

Campsite Improvement - Four sites have been identified for access modifications. These sites would remain open for use, but restricted to walk-in traffic only. Motorized disturbances would be rehabilitated, creating a more secluded environment for dispersed campers.

Three of these sites were originally analyzed under the 2002 Eagle Creek Dispersed Recreation Site Rehabilitation Decision Memo (DM – see appendix G for original maps). The Eagle Creek Recreation Site project was not implemented, and site-specific reconnaissance during field review for Two Eagle determined that resource conditions have degraded since the original DM was approved. As a result, three sites from this analysis were incorporated into each of the Two Eagle alternatives. Site #3 would have vehicle access blocked to prevent motorized use of the delicate meadow. Site #5 illustrates the access

road to a little-used site would be entirely rehabilitated, keeping the site open to foot traffic. In another location, the access point to site #6 would also be converted to foot traffic only.

One dispersed site near the Eagle Creek Bridge (located at the end of proposed Temp road #24) currently expands into areas that cannot sustain a high rate of recreational use. This site would be modified by fencing and/or native materials to concentrate use in the most sustainable area.

Interpretive Site Creation - Harvest improvement unit 5 off the 6700 road offers the opportunity to create an interpretive site explaining the historic and cultural significance of the Phillips-Ingle ditch. The construction of this ditch shares a cross-cultural narrative with Chinese immigrants and gold miners. This interpretive site would serve as a source of information to shed light on the evolution of this ditch from servicing mining needs over a century ago to supplying irrigation demands today. The installation of this site would highlight some of the WSR's outstandingly remarkable values.

Proposed HIM unit 9, located on NFS road 6700-132, has an outstanding viewpoint that could be improved and made into an interpretive site after harvest activities are complete. Designating a viewpoint to overlook the Eagle Creek drainage would improve safety, as people could pull into an established turnout instead of stopping on the heavily utilized 6700 road. Trees removed from this unit would extend the viewing range enhancing the visual diversity of the area. This is an exceptional opportunity to explain the area's unique natural and cultural history.

Meadow Restoration - The meadow behind Two Color Guard Station has been utilized by motorized vehicles as a travel route to access the river. The meadow has received extensive damage from ATV use and would benefit from excluding motorized activities and laying patches of native sod in the downcut areas running through the meadow. To restore and preserve the scenic integrity and species diversity of the meadow, an estimated 40-50 foot section of buck and rail fence would replace the existing primitive barrier behind the guard station parking lot. Walking access to the river would be unchanged. Additionally, equipment or hand tools would be used to scrap sod from local materials and strategically place sod mats throughout the downcut channel to slow water flows, disperse water, and backfill sediment.

Whitebark Pine Restoration - Whitebark pine (listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act) occurs at very low levels within the project area. Treatment within the following units are designed to create small canopy openings around individual and patches of whitebark pine to promote their growth, vigor and resiliency to insect, disease and wildfire.

If any white bark pine, *Pinus albicaulis*, trees are found inside other harvest units they would be protected. Whitebark pine would be marked with the leave tree mark, to ensure that the tree would not be cut. Also, any close (<10' horizontal distance from the white bark pine) operational skidding or forwarding would be avoided when practical. **Affected units: 58, 63, 78, 79**

Public Safety - Firearm use is a prohibited activity in established campgrounds as well as across or linearly to designated trails. Recent violations have raised concern among Boulder Park campsite users and cabin owners alike. The 7755 would be signed one half mile from the Boulder Park Campground to indicate Forest Service policy and guidelines about firearm use to help inform the public, prevent future violations and protect public safety.

The Phillips-Ingle ditch is used as a primary travel way by ATV's causing damage to the ditch and creating a risk to public safety. Access points into the ditch exist on steep embankments pose increased danger to ATV users. Additionally, the unregulated use of motorized vehicles in these ditches increases sediment delivery to water and compromises ditch banks putting the ditch structure at risk for overtopping or breaching. This increases maintenance needs, liability and costs for the ditch company. Additionally, ditch maintenance activities put users at risk during construction-related activities due to rocks or other

debris rolling down hills into roadways. A gate and signage near commonly used access points would be implemented to correct these safety concerns including temporary signage during ditch maintenance activities when there is potential to impact a major road or other publicly accessible areas.

Fish Habitat Enhancement - Existing points of diversion for the Phillips-Ingle ditch are un-screened allowing fish to be entrained within the ditch. There is an opportunity to work cooperatively with ditch users to modernize head gates and/or install fish screens to alleviate the risk to fish inadvertently accessing the ditch and improve operations and maintenance of the ditch.

Mule Deer Habitat Enhancement - Three receding meadows have been identified in the Two Eagle project area for restoration work to decrease encroachment of conifers and reduce the risk of high intensity wildfire. These meadows provide important habitat for early spring mule deer fawning.

This prescription includes area within the Eagle Creek Riparian Habitat Conservation Area. Treatment would range from 80 - 300 feet away from Eagle Creek (see maps in Appendix B). All cutting would be performed by hand, with the purpose of removing lodgepole pine and grand fir under 9 inches DBH inside identified areas. Trees greater than 9 inches DBH would be retained in the meadow. Slash would be bucked up into smaller sections and scattered, piled and burned later, or used for stream restoration wood debris projects. No trees within 80 feet of Eagle Creek would be cut. Stump heights would be less than 4" when possible to reduce visual ethics.

Mitigations and Monitoring

Mitigation measures incorporated as part of this decision include specific treatment design features as well as a variety of specific resource measures described in the EA on pages 31-46. The following mitigation revisions (*in italics*) include:

- Diameter Harvest Limits - No live trees greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH would be cut unless they create a safety hazard *or operational barrier to harvest activities. Cut trees will remain on site.*
- Snags – Snags *>12" DBH* would be retained unless identified as posing a safety hazard. Snags felled for safety reasons would be retained onsite to contribute to coarse wood where coarse wood amounts are deficient.

Monitoring requirements can be found in the EA on pages 50-53.

Alternatives

The Two Eagle interdisciplinary team developed alternatives based on the project purpose and need, as well as key issues and other concerns identified through public input and internal analysis Forest Service management objectives are incorporated into alternatives by following the standards and guidelines of the Wallowa-Whitman National forest Plan, as amended.

Alternative One
This alternative constitutes the "No Action" alternative required by NEPA. Fuel reduction activities, road work, timber harvest, and various enhancement opportunities identified in this analysis would be deferred. This alternative forms the baseline for comparison of the action alternatives.

Alternative Two – Proposed Action

Fuels and Vegetation treatments are designed to meet the goals of the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy (CWS) to restore and maintain landscapes, create fire adapted communities, and improve fire response times as well as fill the gap in resource conditions by moving the existing conditions toward the desired conditions outlined in the purpose and need and forest plan.

Alternative Two Modified
This treatment is the preferred alternative and described in the Decision above.

Alternative Three
This alternative was designed to meet the goals of the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy (CWS), and to respond to the key issues developed as a result of scoping the proposed action including old growth and moist forests, temporary roads, landscape connectivity, and fire behavior. Changes associated with alternative three address these key issues by deferring OFMS treatments in moist areas, reducing temporary road construction, and omitting treatments in connective corridor units.

CONSIDERATION OF KEY ISSUES

Fire Behavior

The three action alternatives considered a variety of treatments that reduce fuel loading to mimic historic conditions commensurate with their potential vegetation groups. Treatments are designed to modify fire behavior around Eagle Creek/Tamarack WUI, create DFPZs along strategic roads, preserve the integrity of the Boulder Park IRA and retain Outstandingly Remarkable Values associated with Eagle Creek WSR. Fire behavior characteristics, DFPZs, and resilient forest are indicators for their effects and summarized below.

Fire Behavior Characteristics
Treatments are designed to modify uncharacteristically dense fuel loading in the project area. The following table summarizes the effects of treatment on fire behavior characteristics in each alternative. Alternatives 2 and 2M have the greatest potential to mitigate potential fire behavior.

Table 4. Effects of treatment on fire behavior characteristics in each alternative

Fire Behavior Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2 and Alt 2M	Alt 3
Fire Rate of Spread	Rate of fire spread exceeds production rates of initial attack crews in direct attack methods. These conditions will continue to limit firefighting opportunities, pose undesirable risk to private property, firefighter and public safety.	Rate of fire spread is reduced to a level that initial attack crews can utilize direct attack methods. Firefighting opportunities are increased, risk to private property, firefighter and public safety are reduced.	Deferral of treatment units leaves critical areas with higher than desired fire rates of spread. Increases the potential for a wildfire to escape initial attack.
Fire Flame Lengths	Flame lengths would exceed the ability of suppression crews to utilize direct attack options. Fire suppression tactics would be indirect thus increasing fire size.	Fire flame lengths would be reduced on treated acres. Use of direct fire suppression tactics decreases the potential fire size; reduce the risk to public and firefighters and private property.	Deferral of treatment units leaves critical areas with higher than desired flame lengths and increases the potential for a wildfire to escape initial attack.

Fire Behavior Characteristics	Alt 1	Alt 2 and Alt 2M	Alt 3
Canopy densities	Canopy densities remain overstocked leading to an increased risk of crown fire and insect and disease attacks.	Canopy densities would be reduced and crown fire potential reduced.	Canopy densities remain near the baseline conditions in modeling groups 1 and 3, leading to increased crown fire potential like Alternative 1.
Canopy Base Heights	Canopy base heights remain low. Trees have a high potential to torch. Crown fire potential remains high.	Canopy base heights are increased, and crown fire potential is reduced.	Deferral of treatment units leaves critical areas with low canopy base heights and the potential for a crown fire is high.
Crown Fire Potential	Crown fire potential remains high.	Crown fire potential is reduced.	Crown fire potential remains high outside of the in the areas that were deferred from treatment.

Defensible Fuels Profile Zones

The creation of DFPZs proposed under all action alternatives would help facilitate the use of both planned and unplanned fire within and adjacent to the project area. The treatments proposed in Alternative 2 and 2M would create functional DFPZs in advance of future fires (planned or unplanned) enhancing fire management options and increasing the probability of success. Alternative 3 defers proposed action treatments within DFPZ's creating gaps in critical areas.

Table 5. Acres of treatments proposed within DFPZs and WUI

Mechanical Treatment Types	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 2M	Alt3
Harvest Treatments	0	1507	1869	1167
Non-Commercial	0	2553	2576	2072
Total	**0**	**4060**	**4445**	**3239**

Table 6. Summary comparison on the effects of DFPZs

Measure	Alt 1	Alt 2 and Alt 2M	Alt 3
Compartmentalization of the project area.	Lack of compartmentalization exist; wildfires have a high potential to spread throughout project area. WUI's and private property are at risk from wildfire. High potential for wildfire to spread from the roadless areas into the WUI.	Completed DFPZ's provide a compartmentalization of the project area decreasing potential wildfire size; reducing risk to private property and WUI's. Creates a DFPZ along road systems adjacent to the IRA and Wilderness.	Compartmentalization would be partially completed. Deferral of treatment units would create gaps in the DFPZ's.

Fire Suppression	Suppression resources have limited options for fire control lines due to existing fuels bed and associated fire behavior Response times for ground crews are delayed due to lack of road maintenance.	Suppression resources have increased options to contain, control or confine wildfire due to the creation of DFPZs throughout the project area. Response times for ground crews are decreased with the proposed road reconstruction and maintenance improving driving conditions and through the installation of gates instead of earthen berms.	Suppression resources have increased options to contain, control or confine wildfire due to the creation of DFPZs in portions of the project area. Response times for ground crews are decreased with the proposed road reconstruction and maintenance improving driving conditions and through the installation of gates instead of earthen berms.
Prescribed Fire	High risk of escape limits RX burning.	RX fire control lines are anchored into the DFPZs which decrease the risk of escape.	Lack of control lines that are anchored into the DFPZs limits RX fire opportunities.
Safety	Existing fuels profile puts landowners, public and fire fighters at risk.	Creation of the DFPZ's reduces risk to landowners, public and fire fighters throughout the project area.	Creation of the DFPZ's partially reduces the risk to landowners, public and fire fighters.

Resilient Forest

The treatments proposed within the action alternatives promote the development of resilient stands able to withstand natural disturbances. Alternatives 2 and 2M improve resiliency on more acres than alternative 3.

Table 7. Summary of treatments on Resiliency

Measure	Alt 1	Alt 2 and Alt 2M	Alt 3
Forest Structure	Stand density exceeds what is desired for site conditions. Places stand at risk to uncharacteristic disturbances. Forest structure continues to move further way from historic ranges of variation.	Treatments restore and promote forest structural and compositional conditions reflective of historical ranges of variation in upland forest. Increased forest resistance to fire, drought, and disease.	Treatments restore and promote forest structural and compositional conditions reflective of historical ranges of variation in dry upland forest. Increased forest resistance to fire, drought, and disease.
Fire use	Limited use of fire continues to alter the ecosystem and decreases resiliency in the drier portions of the project area.	Both planned and unplanned fire are utilized to improve forest resiliency and decrease departure from HRV.	RX fire treatments are reduced by 1,179 acres. Both planned and unplanned fire are utilized to improve forest resiliency and decrease departure from HRV.

In summary, fire behavior as defined by characteristics, defensible fuels profile zones and forest resiliency are most effectively mitigated by actions proposed in alternatives 2 and 2M.

Treatments in OFMS and Moist

An analysis of the historic range of variability (HRV) assessed how current forest condition compared to what ecologists believe existed during the pre-settlement era. A large departure of key forest structures

from historic conditions was identified. These structures, in historic proportions on the landscape, are important to wildlife populations, stand health and forest productivity.

Table 8. Existing old growth acres compared to HRV for the project area

PVG	Existing Acres	% of PVG	Historical Range %
Old Forest Multi Stratum (OFMS)			
Moist Upland	5,073	47%	15-20%
Dry Upland	2,773	41%	5-15%
Cold Upland	3,313	44%	10-25%
Old Forest Single Stratum (OFSS)			
Moist Upland	131	1%	10-20%
Dry Upland	212	3%	40-60%
Cold Upland	0	0%	5-20%
Understory Re-initiation (UR)			
Moist Upland	4,091	38%	10-20%
Dry Upland	1,979	29%	5-10%
Cold Upland	2,906	38%	10-25%

Alternatives 2 and 2M include 394 acres of treatment in OFMS and 384 acres in alternative 3, all with the intent to promote OFSS stand structures through commercial harvest. An estimated 172 acres of non-commercial treatments are proposed within OFMS for alternative 2 and 2 modified. Alternative 3 proposed 137 acres of non-commercial treatment within OFMS.

Cold Upland Forest Group

Table 9. Pre- and Post-Treatment Forest Structural Stages for Cold PVG in percentage for Alternatives 2, 2M, and 3

			Estimated Impacts		
Forest Structural Stage for Cold PVG	RV values	No Action (%)	Alt 2 (%)	Alt 2 Modified (%)	Alt 3 (%)
OFMS: Old Forest Multi-strata	10-25%	44	43	43	44
OFSS: Old Forest Single Stratum	5-20%	0	3	3	1
UR: Understory Re-initiation	10-25%	37	35	35	36

Stand initiation is estimated to increase with all alternatives due to the gap opening (HPO) and seed tree (HCR) treatment in UR cold PVG stands. OFSS is estimated in the next 20-50 years to be created through treating UR and a minor component of OFMS with HTH and HIM treatments.

Moist Upland Forest Group

Table 10. Pre- and Post-Treatment Tree Forest Structural Stages for Moist PVG in Alternatives 2, 2 M, and 3

			Estimated Impacts		
Forest Structural Stage for Moist PVG	RV values	No Action	Alt 2 (%)	Alt 2 Modified (%)	Alt 3 (%)
OFMS: Old Forest Multi-strata	15-20%	47	46	46	47
OFSS: Old Forest Single Stratum	10-20%	1	6	6	3
UR: Understory Re-initiation	10-20%	38	34	34	36

OFSS is estimated to develop in the next 20-50 years through treating moist PVG UR with HTH and HIM prescriptions. OFMS is estimated to be maintained with HTH and HIM treatments that maintain a canopy cover of greater than 45% and lack the old, large early seral species component.

Dry Upland Forest Group

Table 11. Pre- and Post-Treatment Tree Forest Structural Stages for Dry PVG for Alternatives 2, 2M and 3

			Estimated Impacts		
Forest Structural Stage for Dry PVG	RV values	No Action	Alt 2 (%)	Alt 2 Modified (%)	Alt 3 (%)
OFMS: Old Forest Multi-strata	5-15%	41	35	35	39
OFSS: Old Forest Single Stratum	40-60%	3	13	13	8
UR: Understory Re-initiation	5-10%	29	25	25	26

Intermediate treatment (HTH and HIM) in dry OFMS stands is expected to restore OFSS stand structures in stands that naturally experienced frequent low intensity surface fires. Intermediate treatments in Dry PVG UR stands is expected to create OFSS which would help increase representation of OFSS conditions that are below HRV for the Two Eagle project area.

In summary, Alternatives 2 and 2M move the most acres toward OFSS across all PVGs while maintaining OFMS well-above HRV. In the short term, these alternatives enhance habitat for wildlife species dependent on both OFSS and OFMS. Alternatives 2 and 2M will also promote development of new LOS over the long term by treating overrepresented structures and increasing fire management options. Each action alternative maintains connectivity corridors between stands of old growth. Down wood would be retained at forest plan levels.

Economics

Management activities on National Forest lands contribute to the local economy by providing jobs for services rendered and commodities produced. Each of the action alternatives align with 1990 Wallowa-Whitman Forest Plan direction by providing wood products to satisfy national needs and benefit local economies and communities consistent with natural resource objectives, environmental constraints, and economic efficiency.

A variety of contracts would be offered to accomplish the project activities identified in each alternative. These contracts create jobs directly through the need for people to perform work on the ground and indirectly through the purchase of materials, supplies, equipment and other services needed to support the contracts. Table 12 summarizes the estimated number of jobs produced by each alternative.

Table 12. Jobs by Alternative (based upon dollars invested)

Alternative	Direct Jobs	Indirect Jobs	Total Jobs
2	41	43	84
2 modified	45	46	91
3	29	33	62

Another metric for local economic activity is the value of all of the goods and services produced as a result of the project work (Direct Output), as well as through the purchase of goods and services needed to support project implementation and the value of goods and services supported by household spending of income earned during project implementation (Indirect Output). Table 13 summarizes estimated outputs produced by each alternative.

Table 13. Total Economic Output for Investments

Alternative	Direct Outputs	Indirect Outputs	Total Outputs
2	$7,935,549	$4,448,023	$12,383,572

2 Modified	$8,613,621	$4,747,080	$13,360,701
3	$5,797,164	$3,397,565	$9,194,728

With each action alternative it is important to consider the likelihood that adequate funds would be available to fully implement the project. Total outputs for Alternative 2M are dependent on the establishment of a biomass market. Each alternative is projected to produce viable sales that will help offset the cost of non-commercial thinning, however none of the alternatives would generate enough revenue to fully implement the work resulting in a need for service contracts.

Beyond forest management contributions, the Two Eagle area is expected to continue to provide quality recreational experiences attracting visitors and increasing economic and employment opportunities in service-oriented businesses in surrounding communities.

In summary, Alternative 2M has the potential for the largest economic output for investments followed by Alternatives 2 and 3, respectively.

Landscape Connectivity

The Two Eagle planning area is in a key position for providing landscape connectivity between adjacent watersheds and the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Each of the action alternatives propose 126 acres of treatment within connectivity corridors. Although connectivity features would be reduced, adequate levels of canopy closure and structural complexity would remain to facilitate movement of wildlife between old-growth habitat patches. Additionally, silviculture prescriptions in connective corridor units would reduce competition between residual trees, increase tree growth rates, and increase trees' ability to defend against insects and diseases, ultimately improving stand resiliency within these corridors over the longer term.

In summary, there is no measurable difference in connectivity between action alternatives.

Road Access

There are approximately 70.1 miles of roads in the Two Eagle project area, of which 41.52 miles are managed as open and 28.58 miles are managed as closed. Road prisms within the project area exist in a variety of conditions. Some are passable with no work needed, while some need a high degree of road work to become passable to even high clearance vehicular traffic. Some road prisms are still visible from old roads which were decommissioned several decades ago.

Table 14. Transportation management by alternatives

Transportation Activities	Alternative 1 Miles	Alternative 2, 2M Miles	Alternative 3 Miles
Total Open Roads in Project Area	41.52	41.52	41.52
Open Roads to be Closed after harvest activities	0.00	3.82	3.82
Open Roads to be Decommissioned after harvest activities	0.00	1.01	1.01
Total Closed Roads in Project Area	28.58	28.58	28.58
Closed Roads to be Opened for harvest activities	0.00	15.33	8.42
Closed Roads to be Reclosed after harvest activities	0.00	10.12	6.94
Closed Roads to remain open after harvest activities	0.00	0.10	0.10
Closed Roads to be Decommissioned after harvest activities	0.00	5.11	1.38
Danger Tree removal (along system haul roads)	0.00	57.32	46.48
Total Temporary Road Construction miles	0.00	5.25	3.57

New Construction of Temporary Roads	0.00	3.5	2.45
Existing non-system into Temporary Roads	0.00	1.75	1.12
Decommission of Existing NF System Roads miles (by harvest and other funding opportunities)	0.00	8.1	11.06
Reconstruction of NF System Roads miles	0.00	1.7	0.7
Additional Gates added	0	4	3
Culvert replacement/reconstruction)	2	4	2
Temporary Culvert Installation	0.00	3	1

In summary, Alternative 2M responds to road management, public access, wildlife impacts and open road density indicators and represents a balanced approach to maintaining access while addressing access related resource concerns.

Other Issues

Environmental consequences for non-key issues are disclosed in the EA on pages 13-14. Effects from these other issues were analyzed in Chapter 3 of the EA, and after review of the consequences I have determined that Alternative 2M meets the purpose and need while mitigating impacts to soils and site productivity, water quality, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, noxious weeds, management indicator species, outstandingly remarkable values.

SUMMARY OF DECISION RATIONALE

The decision to select Alternative 2M is based on thoughtful consideration of input provided by the public and specialists and need to respond to important ecological conditions and associated restoration opportunities. Alternative 2M addresses important ecologic and socio-economic concerns more comprehensively than Alternatives 2 and 3 in the following ways:

- Provides a wider variety of socio-economic benefits through direct and indirect outputs (see economics effects in EA p 147)
- Implements vegetation treatments to improve stand resiliency and move structures toward the Historic Range of Variation (Forest Health and Sustainability effects EA p. 59-67)
- Promotes the recovery of white bark pine and hardwood communities (EA p. 23)
- Establishes Defensible Fuels Profile Zones and meets the needs of Wildland Urban Interface (Fuels effects, EA p. 71-77)
- Maintains habitat integrity to provide for wildlife needs such as connectivity, snags and downed wood (Wildlife effects, EA p. 98-99)
- Incorporates Best Management Practices, project design criteria, and mitigation measures to protect soil, water, cultural, and wildlife resources (EA p. 31-46)
- Improves public safety in and around recreation areas by removing hazard trees and improving signage on firearm/shooting prohibitions near Boulder Park Recreation Area (EA p. 168)
- Reduces resource impacts from unauthorized motorized use while maintaining access for public and administrative needs (Transportation effects, EA p. 150)

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

In reviewing the EA and actions associated with alternative 2M, I have concluded that my decision is consistent with applicable statutory laws, policies, and regulations found in the EA, pages 183-185 and the following:

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NEPA establishes the format and content requirements of environmental analysis and documentation. The project was designed in conformance with the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

Requirements of the National Forest Management Act of 1976, including its amendments to the Forest and Range Renewable Resource Planning Act of 1974 would be met. Timber harvest would only occur on soils, slopes, or watershed conditions that would not be irreversibly damaged. Protection is provided for streams and streambanks from detrimental changes in water temperatures and deposits of sediment that would prevent serious and adverse effects to water conditions or fish habitat (EA Aquatic Resources and Species section).

Finding of consistency with Forest Plan Management Direction

From the results of site-specific analysis documented in the EA, I conclude that this action is consistent with the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended (EA, Chapter 3).

This project was designed in conformance with the long term goals and objectives of the land and resource management plan and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan standards and guidelines for soils, wildlife habitat, riparian and fisheries habitat, vegetation, water, fuels, air quality, threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, visual resources, and management area guidelines (Forest Plan, Chapter 4).

Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River (WSR)

Eagle Creek WSR outstandingly remarkable values include recreation, scenery, fisheries, and cultural resources. Project activities described under selected alternative 2M meet the Eagle Creek WSR Plan desired future conditions of maintaining the quality and diversity of ORVs, maintaining the largely free-flowing nature of the river, preserving the natural appearing environment and intent of Semi-primitive and Roaded Natural ROS (EA pages 167-177).

Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed, in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared (See FONSI, EA pages 186-187).

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended

The Endangered Species Act requires protection of all species listed as “threatened” or “endangered” by federal regulating agencies (Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service). Biological Evaluations/Biological Assessments for Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive plant, wildlife, and fish species have been completed. Determinations were made that none of the proposed activities would adversely affect, contribute to a trend toward Federal listing, nor cause a loss of viability to the listed plant and animal populations or species. Details regarding the actual species found within the Two Eagle project area and the potential effects of proposed activities on those species and their habitat are contained in the EA, chapter 3, under the Wildlife, Aquatic Resources and Botany sections, and summarized in the FONSI.

Clean Water Act, as amended

The Clean Water Act provides overall direction for the protection of waters of the United States from both point source and non-point source pollutants. Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ)

implements the Clean Water Act in Oregon. Section 303(d) of the act requires improvement of impaired streams.

The EPA has certified the Oregon Forest Practices Act and regulations as established management practices (BMPs). The state of Oregon has compared Forest Service practices with state practices and concluded that Forest Service practices meet or exceed state requirements. Site-specific BMPs have been designed to protect beneficial uses. The application of water quality BMPs and list of applicable BMPs that will be utilized to implement the activities in the selected alternative are discussed in the Aquatic Resources specialist Report.

This decision is consistent with the Clean Water Act and Forest Plan standards and will not prevent the attainment of any INFISH Riparian Management Objective (RMOs) currently not meeting standards, it will move some RMOs towards attainment, and will not degrade RMOs for aquatic habitat presently meeting standards. Forest Plan consistency is achieved by following BMPs.

Clean Air Act

The selected alternative will comply with the Clean Air Act. The Act prescribes air quality to be regulated by each individual state. The Forest Service will follow directions of the Oregon State Forester in conducting prescribed burning in order to achieve strict compliance with all aspects of the Clean Air Act and adherence to the Oregon Smoke Management Plan (EA p. 77).

Environmental Justice and Civil Rights

Executive Order 12898 (Feb. 11, 1994) requires all federal agencies to make environmental justice part of each agencies mission, by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high, and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations or low-income populations. The alternatives were assessed to determine whether they would disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations, in accordance with Executive Order 12898. Logging, mill production, and reforestation under all action alternatives are expected to help sustain employment and income opportunities within Union and Baker Counties, including those of minority and low-income groups. No minority or low-income populations would be adversely impacted by implementation of any of the alternatives. The project would have no impacts on any Native American Indians, women, or the civil liberties of any American Citizen (EA p. 143-148, 161-163).

CONSIDERATION OF COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC AND OTHER AGENCIES

This project was originally listed as a proposal on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis. Interested parties were invited to review and comment on the proposal through mailings during the scoping and public comment periods, news releases, and a public open house. The EA lists agencies consulted on pages 7-8.

Interested parties were notified on November 22, 2017 by mail, newspaper release, and Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) that the Two Eagle proposed action was available for comment on the forest webpage. Eight comment letters were received during the scoping period, from which alternatives and additional analysis were developed in response to concerns raised.

The 30-day comment period on the draft EA began on June 05, 2019. A letter to notify interested parties of the upcoming comment period, as well as a newspaper release and SOPA update were provided. Two comment letters were received during the 30-day comment period. Some analysis was supplemented as a result of these comments.

For a complete list of comments and objection responses, please see the comment consideration forms in Appendix G of the EA.

PRE-DECISIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROJECT REVIEW

The 45-day objection period notification was published in the La Grande Observer on August 23, 2019. Additionally, eligible participants were mailed a letter of notification. The Forest received objections from Baker County, the American Forest Resources Council (AFRC) and Greater Hells Canyon Council (GHCC).

A 30-day extension following the 45-day response to objection period was granted by the Objection Reviewing Officer to continue working toward a resolution with objectors. Two of the three objectors (AFRC and Baker County) withdrew their objections based on resolution reached with Baker County. These parties were issued respective letters acknowledging their withdrawal on December 20 and 23, 2019. As a result of resolution, the Responsible Official agreed to make the following changes to the post-sale road management plan:

- The interdisciplinary team identified National Forest System (NFS) road 6700-839 for an opportunity to manage as closed (ML1). Road 6700-839 is located mid-slope, outside of riparian areas and provides access for future forest management. Retaining the road in storage will support future access needs without negative resource impacts.
- A gate will be installed on NFS road 7700-470 for a total of 4 gates, increasing the total mileage of gated roads with administrative access to approximately 5.92 miles.

In addition to the modifications described above, the forest offers the following:

- Roads used for harvest activities will remain open for up to 5 years following harvest to allow for post-sale activities (fuels reduction, invasive species treatment) and public firewood gathering before implementing road closures.
- Roads closed with gates will be evaluated for future seasonal public use at the discretion of the Responsible Official, based on resource specialist approval and coordinated with Baker County.

The forest commits to participate in field and/or office reviews of identified road closure and decommissioning with objecting parties prior to implementation of any closures or decommissioning activities to allow opportunity for constructive dialogue on road management and access in the Two Eagle project area. Potential revisions to identified road closures or decommissioning resulting from these reviews will be considered based on consensus of objecting parties and review by IDT specialists to ensure any revisions are consistent with project objectives and effects disclosure.

Objector GHCC was issued a letter and detailed response to their objection issue on December 23rd, 2019, as required by 36 CFR 218.11(b)(2). No other instructions or modifications were made to the final decision.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) were initially notified of this project during the 2016 Program of Work (POW) presentation. This project has been included in subsequent POW meetings, received Government-to-Government consultation, and has been presented to wildlife and natural resource committees. For a complete list of CTUIR involvement see p. 7 of the EA.

SHPO CONSULTATION

SHPO concurrence on a determination of **No Historic Properties Adversely Affected** was reached on 02/03/2020. No additional consultation is needed.

ESA CONSULTATION

This project is consistent with Project Design Criteria documentation under the Blue Mountain Expedited Section 7 Consultation process. US Fish and Wildlife agree with the findings that this project May Affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect (NLAA) Columbia River Bull Trout or their critical habitat. Consultation was concluded on 08/24/2018.

IMPLEMENTATION

This project may be implemented immediately upon signature of this decision notice.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Brianna Carollo, Environmental Coordinator, La Grande Ranger District, 3502 Hwy 30 La Grande, OR 97850, (541) 962-8588

January 11, 2021

Bill Gamble
District Ranger
La Grande Ranger District

Date